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AN

EXAMPLE

for

THE CHILDREN

OF

SUNDAY SCHOOLS;

In a brief Account of the

LIFE AND DEATH

of

ELIZABETH RADDEN,
OF WHITCHURCH, HANTS.

BY T. BINGHAM.

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EXAMPLE, &c.

ELIZABETH RADDEN was born the 18th of January, 1773; she was from her infancy, a child of a very warm impetuous temper, impatient of contradiction, or restraint; very obstinate when opposed, but easily led by kindness; when I first began the Sunday School, in the year 1785, she, and another girl about her age, were my first scholars; and that circumstance, with some others which rose from it, began a friendship between them, which discovered its continuance in the very last words she spoke in this world, and still glows in the breast of the survivor with an unabated warmth.

She had (among other vices incident to children) been much addicted to taking God's name in vain, though often reprov-
ed for it by her mother; and I have frequently since heard her bitterly lament,

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how difficult she found it to subdue that wicked habit.

Before there was any appearance of her being imprest with a sense of divine things, her attachment to me and Mr. Pearce, my dear friend and fellow-helper in the school, equalled, if not exceeded that of most children to their parents ; though at the same time, such was the levity of her disposition, so prone to laugh at the most solemn subjects, and such an aversion to all serious thoughts was evident in her, that I own I was often tempted to desist from speaking to her any more on religious matters, as it seemed quite in vain, and I viewed her as one lost to God and goodness, and totally incorrigible in sin.

But at length (blessed for ever be the God of all grace) He was pleased, by means of the instructions given in the school, (and particularly one time, when my friend, Mr. Pearce, was speaking to the children there) to affect her heart with a deep sense of her guilt and vileness ; and now there was soon a visible alteration in her conduct ; she attended with the utmost constancy and seriousness on the word ; redeemed time for secret prayer and meditation ; and was earnestly seek-

ing the way of life and salvation by Christ. Many a time have I blushed with shame, when under the preaching of the word, or when talking to the children in the school, I have seen the tears trickle down her cheeks, (though she tried to conceal them) while, alas! my own heart was lifeless and inattentive.

The change in her outward conduct was visible to her mother, though she was exceedingly shy of speaking, except to her young friend, whom she could trust, till by degrees having observed the evident alteration in her, I found means to engage her to use freedom with me, and when once she obtained courage to express the views the Lord had given her, of her lost state by nature, and her inability to save herself—she was eager to improve the liberty I gave her of applying to me, at every opportunity, for what poor advice and instruction I could give her.

Happy have I been many times to see her discover such unaffected piety, such holy love to God, such a filial fear of offending him, such a love to, and concern for, the welfare of souls (especially those of her near relations and her dear school-

fellows) such an humble sense of her own unworthiness, such a jealousy over her own heart, and such a deep acquaintance with the temptations of Satan, as I scarce ever saw in an old experienced christian.

She was no stranger to spiritual distress, and often, under a view of the evil of her own heart, used to say with tears, that she was such a vile ungrateful sinner that Christ would have nothing to do with her.

The first time she was enabled to attain to any comfortable hope of salvation through Christ, was April 14th, 1789, under a sermon preached by Mr. Kinsbury of Southampton, at the settlement of Mr. Brown as pastor of the church here, on 1 Thessalonians, the 2d and last verse; she was very sensible of the pollution of her own heart, and of the danger she was in, if left to herself, of being drawn aside by every temptation, and on that account was very reserved concerning her own experience, and often earnestly entreated me never to mention a word to any christian friend of what she had communicated to me, lest (as she said) they might be led to think better of her than she deserved! and that if she should fall into

sin, disgrace might be brought on religion thereby, which would be worse than death for her to think of.

No opportunity of hearing the word, or of being present at the social meetings for prayer and conference among us, was omitted by her ; and if any of her young friends and acquaintances neglected such opportunities, it was matter of lamentation to her.

For the ministers of the gospel of every denomination she had an high esteem ; particularly our pastor ; and any slight cast on him, affected her more than the greatest affront offered to herself.

During the last summer the two young friends used to spend their evenings frequently in the church-yard, sitting on the grave of a pious young woman, who died last year, and there conversed together on the concerns of another world ; and as she told me since, on her sick-bed ; " Many mournful and some joyful hours have we spent there."

The sabbath after my dear aunt's decease, which took place October 16th, the two young friends desired to see her corpse ; and, as I was speaking to them of the joyful employment of heaven, which

I doubted not my dear departed friend was gone to bear a part in, Betty Rad-den burst out into a flood of tears, crying, " You can look with comfort on the body of your dear friend, because you are satisfied she is gone to glory; but, oh! but oh! if it was my poor dear father lay there, and I had no more satisfaction about him than I have now, I fear I should go distracted:" (and shortly after, she said very solemnly) " I have been thinking so continually about death and eternity lately, that I am ready to think, I shall be the next out of the congregation that will be called away."

Once, when I was reading in the school to the children, some of those precious examples of early piety in Janeway's Token for Children, she was much affected, and wept bitterly, saying, " O! I shall never experience such a death-bed as these sweet children did."

One instance of her gratitude and affection to me, I cannot omit inserting, as it so much affected my own mind, and rendered me the more attentive to her during her illness afterwards, and still endears her memory the more to me:—About a week after my aunt's interment,

she was at my house; I was then very ill, and apprehensive that I should be totally laid by; I happened to say,—that I had now buried every one of my near relations, and that if the Lord should be pleased to lay his hand on me, so as to render me incapable of waiting on myself, I knew no person who would attend on me from a principle of love; so I must be content with mere mercenary attendance. She cried out in a burst of tears. “O! I would, I would wait on you day and night with pleasure, without a farthing, for you have been my best friend.”

About a fortnight before her illness, as she told me afterwards, she felt such a heart-affecting sense of the love of God to her soul, that almost overpowered her—and not having a convenient place of retirement in the house, she took her food in her hand (it being dinner time) and got away to a meadow in the neighbourhood, where she sat down on a stile, and poured out her soul to God, in such an holy extacy as she had never felt before.

I believe it was this time that she referred to, when she told her young friend

afterwards, she felt such an earnest desire for the salvation of her dear father, that she entreated the Lord, that if it might prove a means of good to his soul, she might herself be visited with any affliction however painful and heavy.

Sabbath day, November 8th, 1789, she found herself very ill, but kept it secret, and attended the school and the public worship all day; and I took particular notice in the evening how much she exerted herself in the singing, as if her whole soul was in what she sung; and her voice which was ever capital, seemed then to excel its usual melody, especially in those lines (the close of a hymn of Mr. Duncan's of Winborn) which was sung at the end of the evening service;

“ O ! that with yonder favour'd throng,

“ We at his feet may fall ;

“ We'll join the everlasting song,

“ And crown him Lord of ALL.”

though far was it from my thought, that her voice would never more be heard in that house.

The next day a violent fever discovered itself, which soon began to assume a putrid appearance: I saw her in the

evening, when she lamented much her not being able to attend the social meeting with us that night; but hoped to get out the Tuesday night.

Tuesday she was much worse, and told me her pain was very great, and, as she had scarce ever known an hour's illness in her life before, she thought it seemed the worse to her; but the worst of all was, its depriving her of those sweet opportunities of public worship she longed to enjoy.

Wednesday she was much distressed in soul fearing she should die, and being in the dark about her own interest in Christ—"O! my dear friend, (said she) I shall die, I shall die the most dreadful death! and I fear I shall go down to eternal death!" I attempted in vain to speak a word of comfort to her; she could receive none.

Thursday my friend Pearce and I were there together, she was still distressed; but after my friend had been engaged in prayer for her, he asked her, if there was no word of promise in the gospel that appeared suitable to her case. She replied, "Yes, yes, there is one;—Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy la-

den, and I will give you rest:—O! I am indeed very heavy laden; but could I but come to that blessed Redeemer, I am sure he would give me rest.” After some farther conversation with her, we left her pretty calm and resigned, and with some hope. That night, another dear young friend and school-fellow of hers, sat up with her the chief part of the night; she was pleading very earnestly the aforesaid promise *, and the Lord was pleased to afford her much comfort therefrom.

Friday I found her in a sweet thankful frame, full of admiration at the goodness of God to her; but her fever was encreased and very dangerous.

Saturday she continued comfortable. In the evening, our minister, Mr. Brown, called to see her; he had been out before, and had not heard how it was with her, finding her in a very bad situation as to her body, he was exhorting her earnestly to seek salvation in Christ, she answered, “Blessed be his name, I have found it in him!” She then mentioned some passages in his past preaching, which

* Matt. xi. 28.

had been useful to her, and particularly reminded him of his having observed in the pulpit just before, that since the beginning of the year several of the congregation had been taken away by death, and probably before the end of the two revolving moons, which yet remained to the close of the year, more might follow — “I thought then (said she) very likely I might be one, and now it appears so.”

In the night betwixt that and the sabbath, she was taken with a violent bleeding at the nose and mouth, which could not be stopped by any means, till she seemed just expiring; she was composed and calm. “I hope, doctor (said she to the apothecary) this will be enough to carry me to my precious Christ; I long to be with him, and the ransomed company in my father’s house above.” At length the bleeding ceased of itself, and she seemed a little revived.

Early the sabbath morn, I was called, with an account that she was dying; when I entered the room, she was speaking earnestly to her father and brother; exhorting them, not to defer the concerns of their souls to a death-bed:—as soon as she saw me, she reached out her hand

to me, and cried—"O! my dear friend, I shall die,—I am just going,—but I bless my God, I am not afraid to die;—I long to go to my father's house above,—you are going to worship him below.—I have enjoyed sweet sabbaths with you here, but now, I shall have a better sabbath than you.—I am going to begin an everlasting sabbath in glory, to begin my everlasting song unto him that hath loved me and washed me from my sins in his own blood.—Come, my dear Redeemer, come,—send thy fiery chariot, and fetch my longing soul.—Cut short thy work, my precious Christ! I long to be gone—when shall I be at home?"

I observed to her, that perhaps she was too impatient to be gone, and that, if it was the Lord's will to continue her in the world a little longer for the good of others, particularly of her dear friends and relations, she should be content. She replied, "O! yes, if it might do them any good, I should be willing to stay—even for years,—though in all the pain and misery I endure; and my pain is very great now,—but it is nothing to what my Redeemer bore for me.—Lord Jesus! my blessed Christ, I hope I do not

offend thee in wishing to bow at thy feet above : I would not offend thee for ten thousand worlds,—thou who hast done so much for me ; forgive me, my Saviour ; alas ! I know not what I did ! I would submit to thy will in all things ;—but I know I shall die ;—my Jesus will fetch me soon. O ! Mr. Pearce ! O, Mr. Bingham, farewell ! I shall see you no more till I meet you around the throne. —Mother, I know you will be there ; but, O ! it breaks my heart, lest any of the family should be missing :—my dear father, my dear brothers and sisters, come to this precious Christ, that you may come after me to glory. My dear Betty G—, hold on as you have begun ; remember if you draw back, you are ruined, soul and body : O ! persevere, that we may meet again in glory !—and then, I'll tell you wonderful things, of what the Lord hath shewed me on this sick bed : I cannot tell you a thousandth part here. —Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit to thy eternal care !" Then fell back in the bed, closed her eyes, and lay apparently dead for some minutes, without breathing ; but after awhile recovered again. " Daniel, my precious

brother, Daniel, keep in the way ; I have good hopes of thee, Daniel,—hold on." In much the same strain she continued incessantly talking all that day to her relations, and to her two dear young friends and school-fellows, who were with her. On my leaving her at seven in the morning, to go to the conference meeting, she cried, " Farewell, my dear friend, I wish you much of the presence of Christ there—ah! if my acquaintance had enjoyed what I have of his presence at those blessed meetings, they would never let trifles keep them from such opportunities—they would come, if they were but just able to crawl thither.

As many of her acquaintance called to see her that day, she spoke to them all, with great affection and earnestness, recommending the Lord Jesus Christ to them ; and though the Lord continued her life longer, contrary to the expectation of the apothecary, who attended her, and indeed of every one who saw her, in a state of great pain and weakness, her language, excepting some intervals when delirious through a fever, was always spiritual. I saw her at least twice a day during her life, and I never left her with-

out astonishment at the displays of God's grace in her.

Hearing one day, when I was there, of a poor thoughtless carnal person in the neighbourhood, being taken dangerously ill with the same disorder, she began weeping and praying earnestly for her, desiring me to leave her, and go to the poor creature; saying, "Now is the time to speak to her of her danger, by reason of sin, and who can tell but the Lord may incline her to hearken."

One evening she said to me, "Mr. B—, if the Lord should spare my life a little longer here, my first desire would be to tell the church, what God hath done for my soul! and to join them in commemorating his love around his table; and if my dear, dear father, was converted and joined to us, I think that would be heaven below to me.—

"Why do you weep for me, father?—weep for your own soul—I am safe if I die now. If I live now, I must soon die; Christ is mine, O! how I love him! better than my life, my all!" Waking once out of a kind of doze, she cried out aloud,—“News! news! good news, father! Jesus Christ is born in Bethlehem,

to save poor sinners. Go to him, father, —make haste—before it is too late.”

Wednesday, November 18th, I was with her in the evening, and she pressed me much to stay awhile; I told her it was school-time, and the children were getting together. “O (said she) poor dear souls, don’t neglect them one moment for me; and, when I am gone, never drop that blessed school to the last hour of your life. I shall praise God for that school to all eternity;—for there my blessed Redeemer first met with me—”

A few evenings after, when taking leave of her, with little prospect of seeing her more in this world, she cried with much affection, “Farewell, my friend, my dear teacher, don’t forget me in your prayers while I am here;—I expect to see you no more here.—but the last petition I shall put up in the body shall be for your welfare; and, whenever your Saviour calls you home—will I (if he permit me) with pleasure come out of the golden gates to meet you the instant you leave the body, and join the angels in conducting your departing spirit to our Immanuel.”

One time she begged her father much to pray with her: he told her he was so much affected he could not speak. "You must (said she) and then I shall be satisfied you do pray for yourself."

One day, when the sun shone, she said, "Father, open the window and let the sun shine in upon me, I used to love the sun-shine, because it put me in mind of the sun of Righteousness, who shines upon my soul. I have walked in the sun shine, by the side of those pleasant streams yonder, and thought of the sweet streams of consolation I have tasted in that meeting-house.

About three weeks before her death, her back began to mortify, and the pain she suffered therefrom was excruciating; yet she never once discovered the least symptom of discontent, or murmuring under the hand of God; and though often delirious, yet there was a savour of piety discoverable in the most incoherent expressions at those times.

About a week before her death, her dearest young friend being there, she said to her, "O my Betty G—, I wish if it were the Lord's will, you could die with me, and that we might ascend together, and bow, hand in hand, before

our blessed Saviour's feet." And why (said I, don't you wish me the same blessing? "No (she replied) I wish you may live above three score years more;" telling her she should have more compassion on her friend, than to wish him so long in the wilderness. She replied again,—“From my heart I wish it, that you may live to tell the children yet unborn, the grace of a dying Redeemer to me! to me! to me! so vile a sinner!”

December 17th, (the day she departed) she was very calm and sensible, and her hearing, which had been much affected by the disorder rather returned. Her dear young friend Betty G—was then ill of the same fever, and had been for several days unable to visit her;—she spoke of it to me with apparent pleasure; saying, she hoped the Lord had heard her prayer, and that her dear Betty was going to heaven with her.

About five in the afternoon, her father came to me, and told me she was just departing; I ran up to the house and found her in convulsions, but sensible and smiling, though in agony; soon after Mr. Brown came in, when he came she was become incapable of speaking; her eyes were

closed, the pulse had ceased to beat, and we thought her totally insensible; but on Mr. Brown's having committed her to God in prayer, she opened her eyes feebly, took him by the hand, and recovered strength enough to say, though very faintly, "Thank you, sir, a thousand times." Then closed her eyes again, and lay as before for about ten minutes, when she again opening her eyes, fixed them on me, and, calling me by my name, said somewhat which I could not understand. I reminded her of the happy meeting we should ere long have in our father's house; she replied, with recovered strength, "We shall, we shall;" then, looking round on her weeping friends with inexpressible tenderness, added, "And why not all? Come, my dear father, brother Richard, Daniel, Polly (naming all the rest in the room)—come,—O come—after me—to—Heaven—mother." Her mother coming up to her, she could speak no more, but squeezed her hand faintly, and after some time (meaning doubtless her dear friend who had been unable through illness to see her for near a week past) cried "Come Betty." In less than a minute after, looking up on

me, she reached out her hand to me, and remembering (I doubt not) her promise three weeks before, that her last petition in the body should be for me, she lifted up her other hand and her eyes to heaven, —then closed them entirely, breathed softly twice, and, without a groan, a struggle, or a sigh, sweetly slept in Jesus.

The next sabbath evening, she was interred in the court of the meeting which she had desired, for this reason, "That you (said she) or Mr. Pearce when talking to the children in the school about the concerns of their souls, may point them to the place where their once loved school-fellow lies, and tell them of the grace of God to me, it may be they will hear."

On that sabbath day night, her brother Daniel, aged 20 years, was taken with the same fever, and lay exactly the same length of time, till his death, January the 28th, and for ever blessed be the God of all grace, there was the same comfort in his death; he bore his affliction with great patience and resignation, though it was rather his wish to live, if the Lord's will, for the sake of his parents, and to be useful in the church of

God below. He expressed his delightful sense of the love of Christ, professed an entire and cheerful reliance on him alone, —and his joyful assurance of rejoining his beloved sister in the regions of eternal glory.—Hallelujah.

* * I attest the exact truth of this brief account, in the views of the awful bar of God—only acknowledging, that it is but a very small part of what might be related, could my memory and those of the friends of the deceased, have retained the wonderful expressions we were ear-witnesses to.

T. Bingham.

FINIS.

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